

Message Text

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ORIGIN HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 INSE-00
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TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR IMMEDIATE
USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 154147

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, TH

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF REFUGEES WITH THAI OFFICERS, JUNE 8

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THAI DELEGATION HEADED BY INTERIOR
UNDER-SECRETARY WINYU MET SEPARATELY WITH DEPARTMENT OFFI-
CIALS INCLUDING HA ASSISTANT SECRETARY DERIAN AND EA DEPUTY
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OAKLEY JUNE 8. THAI COMPLAINED THAT INFLUX OF REFUGEES WAS
GREATER THAN OUTFLOW; ASKED WHETHER U.S. WOULD TAKE 25,000
ONLY NEXT YEAR OR ANNUALLY IN FUTURE; URGED US TO TAKE MORE,
INCLUDING THOSE WHO DID NOT MEET OUR CRITERIA; CALLED ON
US TO ENCOURAGE OTHER COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY IN LATIN
AMERICA, TO TAKE MORE; SUGGESTED THAT WE TRY TO GET INDO-
CHINESE COUNTRIES TO STANCH OUTFLOW; AND REQUESTED THAT U.S.

NOT PUBLICIZE THAI REVERSAL OF EXCLUSIONARY POLICY SO AS NOT TO ENCOURAGE MORE REFUGEES. U.S. SIDE ASKED THAI TO EXPAND TRANSIT CENTER AND LEGALLY DOCUMENT CAMP MARRIAGES TO ACCELERATE DEPARTURE OF REFUGEES; URGED THAI TO PROVIDE INVENTORY OF REFUGEE SKILLS TO COUNTRIES OF RESETTLEMENT TO PROMOTE THEIR ACCEPTANCES; CALLED ON THAI TO PREVENT PIRACY OF REFUGEE BOATS; AND REQUESTED THAI VIEWS ON HOW BETTER TO INTERNATIONALIZE SOLUTION TO PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

2. THAI DELEGATION EN ROUTE FROM BOLIVIA TO CANADA MET DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS JUNE 8 FOR TOUR D'HORIZON OF REFUGEE PROBLEM. THEY WERE MILDLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY PROJECT TO RESETTLE HMONG IN BOLIVIA. (ON JUNE 13, FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY PRESIDENT WARD INFORMED DEPARTMENT OFFICER THAT BOLIVIANS HAD SIGNED AGREEMENT.) THAI ASKED THAT USG SUPPORT PROJECT BUT DID NOT SPECIFY HOW. THEY PLANNED PRESS CANADA TO ACCEPT MORE REFUGEES.

3. OUTLINING PROBLEM IN THAILAND, THEY SAID THERE WERE NOW 150,000 REFUGEES; 34,000 NEW ONES EACH YEAR; AND ONLY 20,000 ACCEPTED ANNUALLY BY THIRD COUNTRIES. ASKED ABOUT 150,000 FIGURE, THEY SAID 50,000 WERE REGISTERED (SIC) BUT OUTSIDE CAMPS. AT CURRENT FLOW RATES, THEY EXPECTED 200,000 IN FIVE YEARS. COMMENT: NOTE THAT THAI FIGURES SHOW OUTFLOW OF ABOUT 10,000 IN FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF 1978 EQUAL

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TO INFLOW.

4. THAI URGED U.S. TO TAKE MORE FOR HUMANITARIAN REASONS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO DID NOT MEET PRESENT U.S. CRITERIA. THAI SAID THEY WERE UNHAPPY WITH U.S. CRITERIA SINCE U.S. AND OTHER COUNTRIES SKIMMED OFF THE CREAM AND LEFT ONLY UNSKILLED BEHIND. WE RESPONDED THAT U.S. WOULD BE PLEASED IF THAI RESETTLED ANY SKILLED PERSONS THEY WANTED TO KEEP. THAI REPLIED THAT THOSE WITH SKILLS HAD ALL BEEN TAKEN IN EARLIER YEARS AND ONLY THE UNSKILLED WERE LEFT.

5. THAI ASKED SEVERAL TIMES ABOUT NEWS ARTICLES REPORTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN VICE-PRESIDENT AND ATTORNEY GENERAL ON WHETHER U.S. WOULD TAKE 25,000 ANNUALLY IN YEARS TO COME OR JUST FOR ONE YEAR. WE EXPLAINED HOW PAROLE AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED AND UNDERLINED CONTINUING U.S. COMMITMENT TO ACCEPT INDOCHINESE REFUGEES AND IN PARTICULAR TO SEEK PERMANENT LEGISLATION FOR THIS PURPOSE.

6. THAI SAID THEY HAD APPEALED TO LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TO TAKE INDOCHINESE, SO FAR WITHOUT SUCCESS. SOME GOVERNMENTS HAD APPEARED RECEPTIVE BUT INDICATED THEY

COULD NOT MAKE COMMITMENTS UNTIL AFTER THEIR ELECTIONS. THAI HOPED BOLIVIAN EXAMPLE WOULD IN TIME ENCOURAGE OTHERS. THEY URGED U.S. ALSO TO MAKE APPEAL TO RELIEVE "YOUR BURDEN." U.S. SIDE PROMISED TO SEE WHAT IT COULD DO REGARDING LATIN AMERICA.

7. THAI POINTED OUT THAT SOME REFUGEES WERE FLEEING INDOCHINA FOR ECONOMIC REASONS, INCLUDING FARMERS FROM LAOS WHO WOULD NOT BE HARMED IF THEY STAYED THERE. THEY WONDERED HOW THEY COULD BE PERSUADED OR HELPED TO STAY THERE AND SUGGESTED THAT THE U.S. APPROACH THE INDO-

CHINESE GOVERNMENTS TO THIS END. THEY ALSO URGED THAT U.S. NOT PUBLICIZE RECENT THAI REVERSAL OF NOVEMBER 15, CONFIDENTIAL

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1977, EXCLUSIONARY POLICY SINCE TO DO SO WOULD ATTRACT MORE REFUGEES. U.S. SIDE POINTED OUT THAT IT HAD GIVEN FOOD AID TO LAOS BUT THAT IT COULD NOT ASK INDOCHINESE GOVERNMENTS TO STOP OUTFLOW, AND ADDED THAT IT HAD NOT PUBLICLY DISCUSSED EITHER FORMER THAI EXCLUSIONARY POLICY OR RECENT SHIFT. INSTEAD IN CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY U.S. OFFICIALS HAD EXPRESS APPRECIATION OF THAI ADMISSION OF REFUGEES.

8. U.S. SIDE URGED THAI TO EXPAND TRANSIT CENTER FACILITIES TO SPEED UP PROCESSING AND OUTFLOW OF REFUGEES. THAI SAID THEY HAD OFFERED UDORN AIR BASE FOR THIS PURPOSE AND WERE LOOKING AT SITE NEAR BANGKOK.

9. U.S. ALSO ASKED THAI TO PROVIDE LEGAL DOCUMENTATION OF REFUGEE MARRIAGES IN CAMPS SO INS OFFICERS WOULD HAVE EVIDENCE THAT MARRIAGES FOLLOWED LAWS OF COUNTRY IN WHICH THEY OCCURRED AND THEREFORE COULD APPROVE PAROLE OF SPOUSE OF PRINCIPAL APPLICANT AND HASTEN THEIR DEPARTURE. THAI AGREED TO PROVIDE LEGAL DOCUMENTATION.

10. U.S. SIDE ASKED WHETHER THAI HAD INVENTORY OF REFUGEE SKILLS TO PROVIDE UNHCR OR ICEM TO ENCOURAGE THIRD COUNTRY ACCEPTANCES. THAI SAID THEY DID AND HAD GIVEN IT TO UNHCR, BUT U.S. NOTED THAT OTHER COUNTRIES MIGHT NOT BE AWARE OF THESE SKILLS.

11. U.S. ASKED WHETHER THAI HAD ANY SUGGESTIONS ON INTERNATIONALIZATION TO FIND SOLUTION TO REFUGEE PROBLEM, PERHAPS THROUGH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE. THAI RESPONDED THAT AT LAST UN MEETING THEY HAD APPEALED FOR ALL MEMBERS TO HELP, AND A RESOLUTION TO THIS EFFECT HAD BEEN ADOPTED. COMMENT: WOULD APPRECIATE ANY INFORMATION FROM USUN ON CONFIDENTIAL

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SUCH A RESOLUTION. PERHAPS THAI WERE CONFUSING UN WITH UNHCR MEETING WHICH DID ADOPT SUCH A RESOLUTION.

12. U.S. SIDE ALSO RAISED QUESTION OF THAI BOATS PILLAGING AND RAPING PERSONS ON REFUGEE BOATS AND SPECIFIED BOAT NUMBER 0399 REPORTED IN KUALA LUMPUR 4287. THAI RESPONDED THAT THERE HAD BEEN PIRACY OF THAI FISHING BOATS, AS WELLS AS REFUGEES, IN SOUTHERN THAILAND AND RTG HAD INSTRUCTED LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO COOPERATE WITH MALAYSIANS TO STOP SUCH ACTS.

13. THERE WAS ALMOST NO DISCUSSION OF RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. THAI INTIMATED THAT THEY WANTED TO CUT DOWN PROJECTED CASELOAD OF 200,000 IN FIVE YEARS, BEFORE THEY

COULD CONSIDER RESETTLING REMAINDER.

14. COMMENT: MEETING PROVIDED FORUM FOR USEFUL EXCHANGE OF VIEWS IN SOME DETAIL. WINYU BEFORE MEETING TOLD DEPARTMENT OFFICIAL HE THOUGHT THREE HOURS MIGHT BE TOO LONG FOR DISCUSSIONS, BUT AFTERWARDS INDICATED IT WAS TIME WELL SPENT. NEITHER SIDE, HOWEVER, HAD SOLUTION TO BASIC PROBLEM OF WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THE REFUGEES, AND THAI AS USUAL SEEM TO BE WAITING FOR U.S. TO COME UP WITH ANSWER. NEWSOM

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